Portsmouth, Virginia Police Department
Department Organization

Police Escorts			OPR	25
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APPROVED: Edward G. Hargis, Chief of Police

PURPOSE: To establish procedures for the providing and managing police escort services.

GUIDELINES: The Department will provide police escort services during occasions or events requiring such services, in a manner consistent with public safety. Special Operations Division personnel, when notified in advance, provide most escort services. There are occasions where the responsibility for an escort may shift to other marked police units.

DEFININTIONS:

Escort - The use of police department vehicles, marked or unmarked, and including motorcycles, horses, and bicycles, to accompany another vehicle, bicycle, pedestrian, or equestrian along a route of travel. An escort is separate and apart from parades and/or demonstrations.

Parade - An officially sanctioned public event, issued permits through the appropriate city agencies, where the police department may be participants or may be assisting with traffic flow and control.

PROCEDURES: (61.3.3 a)

I. Emergency Vehicle Escorts

A. Police vehicles shall not escort other public safety vehicles in an emergency response (lights and sirens), except in the most extreme and unusual circumstances. A supervisor shall approve any such exception shall be approved in advance by a department supervisor.

B. Escorting a public safety vehicle with malfunctioning warning equipment while engaged in an emergency mission is a valid exception to the above, but must be undertaken with extraordinary caution and due regard for safety.

II. Private Vehicle Escorts

A. Police vehicles may lead another vehicle to a particular destination under normal, routine driving conditions without the aid of emergency lights and siren, while obeying all applicable traffic laws. Under no circumstances will officers utilize emergency vehicle privileges with this type of escort.

B. Sick or injured persons who require emergency transportation to a hospital shall be transported by ambulance (emergency medical services), or very rarely, in a police vehicle. Police personnel and vehicles shall not provide emergency (lights and siren) escorts of private vehicles. (61.3.3 b)

III. Other Escorts (61.3.3 a)

A. Oversize Loads/Hazardous Cargo

1. The Portsmouth Police Department requires that all oversize loads and hazardous materials carriers adhere to laws and regulations of the Federal Highway Administration, Virginia State Transportation Board, the Code of Virginia, and City of Portsmouth codes that govern the movement of these types of loads.

2. The requester and the City Traffic Engineer will coordinate oversize loads, hazardous cargo, and other special load escorts. It is the City Traffic Engineer's responsibility to issue a permit with route instructions and to coordinate with the Chief of Police or designee prior to the date of the needed escort. Routes established by the traffic engineer must be strictly adhered to due to height, width, weight, and load limits on certain city streets.

3. Police personnel conducting escorts under this section are authorized to use warning equipment to assume control of traffic patterns, intersections, and to ensure the safe delivery of the cargo, as needed.

4. Private escorts may be used for oversize loads and/or hazardous cargo. If an officer finds an oversize or hazardous cargo load moving within city limits with an improper escort or no escort, and it poses a danger to the public, the officer will stop the load at a safe location and check for violations. The officer should then contact the City Traffic Engineer to determine load limits and authorized routes.

5. Certain types of cargo may be escorted by unmarked, private or military vehicles. Examples include special carriers for nuclear waste and sensitive military cargo. Some discretion may be necessary since there may be occasions when the carrier has been directed not to stop. One of the escort vehicles should identify itself and the carrier should be allowed to continue.

6. The Portsmouth Police Department will not provide escorts to hazardous materials carriers, unless an emergency situation is involved. The nature of hazardous materials escorts requires specially trained escort drivers with knowledge of the material being transported and the required response to an incident involving the hazardous materials.

B. **Special Escorts**

1. Escorts of public officials and dignitaries will be coordinated through the Special Operations Division Commander or designee. If approved, the Special Operations Division Sergeant is responsible for preplanning the escort. The Sergeant shall use Special Operations Division personnel for the escort and may also use uniform patrol personnel when appropriate.

2. The Special Operations Division Sergeant will contact the appropriate person from the requesting entity to determine the following:
   a. The type of escort required according to the nature of the escort, with consideration given to other factors such as threat potential.
   b. The route to be taken, traffic lanes to be used, and appropriate speed. The day of week, time of day, number of traffic signals, number of vehicles escorted, and traffic density.

c. All due consideration should be given to the safety of the public and traffic laws when conducting escorts.

3. Police personnel conducting escorts under this section are authorized to use warning equipment to assume control of traffic patterns, intersections, and to ensure the safe delivery of the cargo, as needed.

C. **Funeral Escorts**

1. Funeral escorts may be conducted upon supervisor approval. If approved, an officer will be assigned the responsibility of preplanning the escort. Typically, Special Operations Division personnel will provide funeral escort services when available; however, uniform patrol personnel may also be used.

2. Funeral homes requesting a police escort should make the request prior to the date of the needed escort. The officer assigned to the escort will contact the person in charge at the funeral home to determine the following:
   a. The expected time of the escort.
   b. The beginning and end locations of the escort.
   c. The route of the escort and the number of vehicles involved.

3. The officer should also assess the time of day, roadway construction, traffic conditions and weather conditions. After doing so, the assigned officer can request additional officers as necessary. Officers are authorized to refuse funeral escort services during inclement weather conditions.

4. Escorts that travel into other cities will be turned over to neighboring departments at the city line, unless otherwise authorized.

5. Police personnel conducting escorts under this section are authorized to use warning equipment to assume control of traffic patterns, intersections, and to ensure the procession's safety, as needed.

6. Once a funeral procession has entered a controlled intersection, escorting officers should take reasonable steps to allow the entire procession to navigate through the intersection. This usually requires a marked unit, with emergency lights activated, to remain in the intersection until the procession has cleared.

7. Preplanned escorts such as public safety funerals or dignitary funerals shall be coordinated through the Special Operations Division. The Special Operations Division will be responsible for planning the escort and assigning needed personnel. During escorts of such processions, exceptions to the guidelines provided above, as deemed appropriate by the supervisor assigned, are authorized due to the benefit of advanced planning.

APPROVED: _____
Edward G. Hargis, Chief of Police